

# Are you ready to talk about suicide?



How would you respond if a friend, family member or coworker threatened to kill themselves or showed signs of suicidal thinking? Which of these reactions seem most helpful?

- a. Tell them to snap out of it
- b. Say their loved ones will never recover if they do it
- c. Show care and listen without judgment
- d. Stay with them until you connect them with help

## You can make a difference

Going back to the question at the start, let's consider the possible answers and how helpful they might be to a person thinking about suicide:

- **Answers "a" and "b" aren't likely to help.** If someone is contemplating suicide, answer "a" will minimize their feelings. And "b" simply tries to use guilt to talk them out of it.
- **Answers "c" and "d" are more effective.** If a person states or shows suicidal intention, they're in real emotional pain. Helpful responses express care and a sincere desire to help.

## Overcome your own fear

Perhaps you're scared to talk about suicide. You may worry you'll say or do the wrong thing. It's a big responsibility. But remember these tips:

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### 1. You can't give someone the idea of killing themselves if they're not already thinking about it.

If you're concerned that someone is suicidal, it's okay to ask, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" That question cuts to the core of your concern. It shows you're trying to understand the person. It helps you assess the danger and informs your next step.

### 2. If the person is suicidal, it's not your job to fix them.

If you discover your friend or relative is suicidal, get them professional help. You can call, or stay with them while they call, the National Suicide Hotline at **1-800-273-8255**. You can take them to an ER or call the police. If a person is actively suicidal, don't leave them until help arrives.

### 3. Don't be afraid to say the word "suicide."

If you saw someone doubled over in pain, wouldn't you ask if they were hurt? Asking about suicide is really the same thing. Suicide is most frightening when we attach a stigma to it. It's just a word.

Sadly, many of us know someone who has attempted or completed suicide. What can you do? Be ready in case you're ever confronted with someone who's suicidal. You just may help save a life.